

# **Office of School Improvement/Field Services Unit Guidance for Use of Title II, Part A for Class Size Reduction**

**Overview Statement:** The purpose of Title II, Part A is to increase the academic achievement of all students by helping schools and districts improve teacher and principal quality and ensure that all teachers are highly qualified. While this allows multiple uses of the funds for professional development, incentives etc. the intent of this document is to review Title II, Part A criteria for use in class size reduction.

Title II, Part A funds may be used to reduce class size if the initiative meets the criteria listed below which have been established by scientifically based research and have been based upon a needs assessment. **The impact on student achievement must be measurable.**

## **Class Size Reduction Criteria**

1. Based upon a needs assessment,
2. Must reduce class size to 17 or fewer,
3. In grades k-3,
4. In classes taught by highly qualified teachers who adjust instructional strategies to fit reduced-class size,
5. For schools with at risk populations of students,
6. Where the effort is sustained for the cohort group for at least 2 years \*

\* Criteria 2-6 are generalized from the findings of several class size reduction studies. See Attachment A.

## **Questions and Answers**

**Q-1.** How do we select schools and/or classes to fund Title II, Part A class size reduction initiatives?

**A-1.** Based on the needs assessment, schools with the highest level of at-risk populations should be considered. Within those schools the grade level that meets the five class size reduction criteria must be selected.

### **Criteria 1: Must reduce class size to 17 or fewer.**

**Q-2.** Does that mean all sections in the grade level must be reduced to 17?

**A-2.** No. Only the classes paid for with class size reduction funds must have 17 or fewer students.

**Q-3.** Does that mean that the class size must stay at 17 students or fewer throughout the year?

**A-3.** The district will be allowed to have more than 17 students per class section in the class size reduction grade span at that school until student adjustments are finalized according to collective bargaining agreements. However, after the September student count day all the class sections funded with Title II, Part A class size reduction must be 17 or fewer students.

**Q-4.** What if the school is impacted by an increase in enrollment at the grade level utilizing class size reduction funds after the September student count day?

**A-4.** After student adjustments are made per collective bargaining agreements and no class section in the selected grade span at that school is 17 students or fewer, the district should contact the Office of School Improvement/Field Services Unit to resolve the issue.

**Q-5.** If our collective bargaining agreement has a class size limit may Title II, Part A funds be used to meet that requirement?

**A-5.** No, that would be supplanting local requirements. Class size reduction staff is supplementary staff. Class size reduction sections are created after enough staff is hired to meet the collective bargaining agreement.

**Q-6.** Is the teacher hired with Title II, Part A funds exempt from local collective bargaining agreements or other local personnel requirements, such as those related to seniority?

**A-6.** No.

**Q-7.** What are some ways we may use Title II, Part A funds to reduce class size?

**A-7.** Schools may reduce class sizes by creating additional classes in a particular grade or subject and placing highly qualified teachers hired with program funds in those classes. However, because of space constraints and other concerns, this is not always feasible. There are other methods to reduce class size that are effective in assisting students increase their level of achievement. "Improving Teacher Quality State Grants ESEA Title II, Part A Guidance, October 2006," Q&A E-17 describes the following approaches:

1. Having two highly qualified teachers team teach in a single classroom for either part of the school day or the entire day.
2. Hiring an additional highly qualified teacher for a grade level (e.g., providing three teachers for two 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes) and dividing the students among the teachers for sustained periods of instruction each day in core academic subjects, such as reading and math.
3. Hiring an additional highly qualified teacher who works with half the students in a class for reading or math instruction, while the other half remains with the regular classroom teacher.

All five class size reduction criteria must still be met if any of the other methods are considered. In addition, the class size reduction teacher would be required to be the teacher of record for half of the students in the class size reduction setting.

## **Criteria 2: In grades K-3.**

- Q-8.** May we start a class size reduction initiative in grade three and maintain the initiative for two years by moving it into fourth grade the second year?
- A-8.** No. Class size reduction initiatives need to begin below grade three to allow for the initiative to be sustained for at least two years in the K-3 grade span.

## **Criteria 3: In classes taught by highly qualified teachers who adjust instructional strategies to fit reduced class size.**

- Q-9.** What does it mean to adjust instructional strategies to fit reduced class size?
- A-9.** Adjusting instructional strategies refers to a substantial change in the delivery of instruction. A class size reduction initiative is more than reducing the number of students in a classroom. The intent of a class size reduction initiative is to offer a high-risk population of students research-based instructional strategies that are shown to be effective with a small class size.
- Q-10.** What kind of instructional strategies and changes in the delivery of instruction are supported by class size reduction research?
- A-10.** The following instructional strategies, changes in the delivery of instruction and factors come from the body of class size reduction research. The following list is not all-inclusive but are the factors cited in the Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (Project STAR) study and other class size reduction studies.
- Metacognitive strategies: Learning how to learn, learning how to monitor own thinking and learning;
  - Mastery learning/teaching to mastery
  - Time on task;
  - High level of student engagement and participation;
  - Response to intervention/early diagnosis of learning difficulty
  - Immediate and specific reinforcement;
  - In class assessment (assessments that are embedded in the instructional process);
  - Differentiated instruction/academic individualization/multiple intelligence theory;
  - Double literacy/reading time

## **Criteria 4: With at risk populations of students.**

- Q-11.** How is Office of School Improvement/Field Services Unit defining an at risk population?
- A-11.** An at risk population is defined as those students who are failing or at risk of failing the state's academic achievement standards. The needs assessment would identify this population.

**Q-12.** Is the membership of the class size reduction class limited only to students at risk? Aren't you promoting tracking?

**A-12.** No to both questions. A supplementary class size reduction class should not consist of only high-risk students. Each of the class sections funded by Title II, Part A would contain students of varying academic abilities.

**Q-13.** What if the teachers in the grade span selected for a class size reduction section are not professionally prepared to deliver instructional strategies based on class size reduction research?

**A-13.** The district should commit to providing professional development to any teacher in the grade span that contains the class size reduction section if he or she is not knowledgeable of class size reduction research. Knowledge of the factors that impact student achievement in the class size reduction studies is critical for long-term, measurable student achievement outcomes.

**Criteria 5: Where the effort is sustained for the cohort group over at least 2 years.**

**Q-14.** How is Office of School Improvement/Field Services Unit defining a cohort group?

**A-14.** The entire grade span at the school selected for class size reduction would be considered the cohort group. The class size reduction would be sustained with this same group at the same school for at least two years. For example, if first grade were selected for the class size reduction initiative that group of students would participate in the class size reduction initiative in second grade and ideally again in third grade.

**Q-15.** Why must the same group be maintained over at least two years?

**A-15.** Research supports the sustained use of class size reduction over two years or more to affect higher student achievement. In fact, the studies of Project STAR indicate that the most significant long-term impact on student achievement resulted with students who attended small classes for four years in a row. Further, at least three years in a small class are necessary in order for the benefits to be sustained through later grades.

**Q-16.** Does the teacher have to remain with the cohort group?

**A-16.** No, but the instructional strategies started in the first year should be sustained, reinforced, and built upon in successive years.

**Q-17.** Can we consider class size reduction for a school that has a high student mobility?

**A-17.** The decision to use Title II, Part A funds for class size reduction is based on the needs assessment. The positive impact on student achievement could outweigh the negative impact of student mobility for students who were in the initiative for two or more years.

## **Other Questions:**

- Q-18.** What is meant by “demonstrating measurable student achievement data over time?”
- A-18.** All class size reduction initiatives must collect longitudinal student achievement data during the entire time period that the initiative is in effect. Annually the data must be used to evaluate the class size reduction efforts to ensure that students are achieving the state’s standards and that long-term achievement gains for the students participating in the initiative are realized.
- Q-19.** Does the same five listed criteria that apply to class size reduction initiatives funded with Title II, Part A also apply to Title I, Part A schoolwide schools and to the use of Title V funds?
- A-19.** Yes. No Child Left Behind legislation states that all instructional strategies must be scientifically research based. Other federally funded class size reduction initiatives must follow the five listed criteria.
- Q-20.** We have had class size reduction sections in our district for several years. The criteria we used to select the grade level are not consistent with the five criteria stated above. We have data to support that our initiative has resulted in measurable student achievement over time. Can we apply for a waiver to keep our class size reduction initiative even though it is not consistent with the five criteria?
- A-20.** All new class size reduction initiatives must follow the listed criteria, but a district can apply for a waiver for current class size reduction initiatives that are not consistent with the five listed criteria. The district would need to provide objective research data that clearly demonstrates positive impact on student achievement. Given the challenges of conducting such research, the district is advised to provide such research to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) prior to requesting the use of Title II, Part A funds for class size reduction so the department has time to review the information and make a careful decision. Use Attachment B as a framework for providing the waiver request. Submit Attachment B and all research data to:

Michael Radke  
Assistant Director for the Office of School  
Improvement/Field Services Unit  
John A Hannah Building  
608 West Allegan Street  
P.O. Box 30008  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

## **Attachment A**

### **Class Size Reduction Studies**

- Achilles, C.M. (1999) Let's put kids first, finally: Getting class size right. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Boyd-Zaharias, J. and Pate-Bain, H. (2000, April) The Continuing Impact of Elementary Small Classes. Paper presented at a Class Size Symposium of the American Educational Research Association: New Orleans, LA.
- Boyd-Zaharias, J. (1999, Summer). Project STAR: The story of the Tennessee class size study. *American Educator*, 23(2), 30-36.
- Boyd-Zaharias, J. and Pate-Bain, H. (1998) Teacher aides and student learning: Lessons from Project STAR. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.
- Finn, J.D. & Achilles, C.M. (1999, Summer). Tennessee's class size study: Findings, implications, misconceptions. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 21(2).
- Finn, J.D. & Achilles, C.M. (1990, Fall) Answers and questions about class size: A statewide experiment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27 (3), 557-577.
- Finn, J.D. Gerber, S.B., Achilles, C.M. & Boyd-Zaharias, J. (1999, May). Short-and long-term effects of small classes. Paper presented at the conference on Economics of School Reform, Israel.
- Kruger, A.B., & Whitmore, D.M. (1999, September). The effect of attending a small class in the early grades on college-test taking and middle school test results: Evidence from Project STAR (Working Paper No. 427). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Industrial Relations Section.
- Reichardt, R. (2001). Reducing class size: Choices and consequences [policy brief] Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Word E.R., et al., (1990). The state of Tennessee's Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) Project: Technical report. 1985-1990. Nashville, TN: Tennessee Department of Education.

## **Attachment B**

### **Waiver Request for Class Size Reduction Initiative that is Not Consistent with the Five Listed Criteria**

#### Class Size Reduction Criteria

1. Must reduce class size to 17 or fewer,
2. In grades k-3,
3. In classes taught by highly qualified teachers who adjust instructional strategies to fit reduced-class size,
4. For schools with at risk populations of students,
5. Where the effort is sustained for the cohort group over at least 2 years

Submit a response to each of the five criteria. State whether the class size reduction initiative currently in place in the district is consistent or not consistent with each of the criterion. For each criterion that the district has not implemented, provide support based on a review of scientifically based research to substantiate your position that student achievement will be enhanced by the class size reduction initiative.

MDE will review your waiver request to determine if the evidence and actual data support implementation of class size reduction under the specific conditions proposed. MDE may require that the data be submitted to an educational researcher for recommendations before approval.